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ABSTRACT

The Early Bird Internship Program in Teacher Education at Union University was developed to give the sophomore student a general field orientation to the whole school program prior to the senior student teaching program. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for a beginning course for all prospective teachers taken near the end of the sophomore year, the student spends a 20-hour internship in a local elementary or secondary school. During the internship, the student becomes exposed to a broad range of experiences which acquaint him/her with the many complex operations of elementary and secondary schools. The student works in the principal's and counselor's offices, assists the classroom teachers with their tasks, works with student government and parent-teacher groups, and becomes involved in other school activities. During the internship, the student keeps an hourly log on all his/her activities and experiences. At the end of the 20-hour period, the principal of the school to which the student is assigned and the Union University instructor make a joint evaluation of the student's internship and his log. (Information concerning program objectives, personnel, budget, contribution to teacher education, and evaluation methods and results is included in this report.) (Author/CR)

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The Union University "Early Bird" Internship Program in Teacher Education

SUMMARY

Traditionally, the college student who wishes to become a certified teacher enters the teacher education program as a sophomore, completes most of his necessary course work during the junior and senior years, and fulfills student teaching requirements just prior to graduation. His first real, sustained contact with the classroom at large, then, comes only after he stands on the threshold of graduation. It is not uncommon for the student teaching experience to awaken the senior student somewhat rudely to the fact that the erstwhile romance between him and the profession of teaching is suddenly over. Yet, it is too late for him to "re-discover himself," choose another vocation, and make the necessary college program changes to prepare for another career. The final results are often unhappy for both the graduate and the teaching profession, not to mention the school child.

With the cooperation of local school systems, a new "Early Bird" Internship Program was inaugurated at Union University during Winter Term, 1975, to help each student make an earlier and perhaps a wiser decision relative to choosing a career in teaching. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for Education 300, "Foundations of American Education," a beginning course for all prospective teachers taken near the end of the sophomore year, the student spends a 20-hour internship in a local elementary or secondary school. During his internship, the student becomes exposed to a broad range of experiences, which hopefully, acquaint him

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with the many complex operations of the modern elementary and secondary schools of today. Unlike student teaching, which focuses on developing the senior student's teaching skills at one or two grade levels, or in as many subject areas, the "Early Bird" program seeks to give the sophomore a general orientation to the whole school program. Ideally, the student works in the principal's and counselor's offices, assists the classroom teachers with their numerous tasks, works with student government and parent-teacher groups, and becomes involved meaningfully in other school activities. During the internship, the student keeps an hourly log on all his activities and experiences. At the end of the 20-hour period, the principal of the school to which the student is assigned and the Union instructor of Education 300 make a joint evaluation of the student's internship and his log. This evaluation comprises 25% of the student's grade in Education 300.

Comprehensive Explanation of the Union University
"Early Bird" Internship Program
in Teacher Education

DESCRIPTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROGRAM

The "Early Bird" Internship Program in teacher education at Union University was developed out of a growing need to give the sophomore student a general field orientation to the whole school program at a date sooner than that of his senior student teaching program. In this manner, he may make an earlier and perhaps a wiser decision relative to choosing teaching as a career. Thus, when he becomes a student teacher, his commitment to the teaching profession is stronger and more genuine than if he had established no prior contact with the "real" school child and his "live" classroom.

The "Early Bird" program was structured in January, 1975, as a part of Education 300, "Foundations of American Education." Since Education 300 is the beginning required course for each student entering the teacher education program at Union University, it is assured that each candidate gets the early internship experience. Taken near the end of the sophomore year, Education 300 requires that each student spend 20 hours in a local elementary or secondary school. During his internship, he is exposed to a wide variety of activities which may acquaint him with the many complex operations of the modern schools of today. Ideally, the student works in the principal's or counselor's office, assists the classroom teachers with their numerous tasks, works with student government and parent-teacher groups, and becomes involved meaningfully in other school activities.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the "Early Bird" Internship program are: (1) To help each sophomore student make an earlier and wiser decision relative to choosing a career in teaching; (2) to provide the sophomore student with a general orientation to the whole school program well in advance of his senior student teaching program; (3) to provide the student with field experiences which will aid him in his senior student teaching program; (4) to help the sophomore student interested in teaching as a career get a realistic view of the schools at large, thus spiking traditional popular "myths" about schools and school teaching (e.g. every teacher has 25-30 "scrubbed," healthy caucasians all alike, with average or above I.Q.'s, who have "normal" home and family backgrounds, and who are there in school eager to learn everything their teacher wishes to teach them); (5) to give the sophomore student a better chance to find a new direction for himself in his college career should he decide against teaching as a career; (6) to provide assistance to the various schools participating in the program whose teachers and administrators are generally oberburdened, especially with "non-professional" duties such as supervising cafeteria lines, counting lunch money, or selling tickets to an athletic event; and (7) to help build good relations with the various local schools, which is absolutely essential to the successful ongoing of laboratory and field experiences in teacher education.

PERSONNEL INVOLVED

The student interns are placed in the Jackson City and Madison County Schools by virtue of an agreement among the Union University Department of Education, the superintendents of the city and county school systems, and the local school principals. Other personnel involved

are: (1) the instructor of Education 300, of which the internship program is a part, and, (2) a variety of teachers and other in-school personnel assigned periodically by the principal to supervise segments of the student's internship experience in the school. The Union University Department of Education Faculty and faculty from other academic areas serve as advisers to the program. The Union University Teacher Education Committee is the official body authorized by the Administration and Faculty to supervise the entire teacher education program. The Teacher Education Committee is composed of eight members of the faculty and two students, in addition to the President and Academic Dean, who serve as ex officio members of the committee.

BUDGET

No special budget is required for the maintenance of the "Early Bird" Internship Program at Union University. The program is adequately funded by the regular budget for the Department of Education.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

The "Early Bird" program provides a much needed opportunity for prospective student teachers to make contact with the "real" classroom in the schools at large much earlier than the student teaching experience provided during the senior year. The romantic sounds of "professional teaching" heard in the theory classes on campus are often distorted or even shattered when the student reaches the classroom in the schools at large. If this experience comes during the last semester of his senior year, it may leave him shocked at finding his chosen profession to be considerably less than what he originally envisioned, and it could be too late for him to make the necessary college program changes to prepare for another career. The final results are often unhappy for

both the graduate and the teaching profession, not to mention the school child. The "Early Bird" Internship Program therefore helps the student to become acquainted early enough with the realities of teaching to allow him to make wise decisions with regard to choosing teaching as a career, and it gives him ample time to plan his college program and his career accordingly. Furthermore, the school at large receives a new teacher who is willing to take the "bad" with the "good" in professional teaching because he more nearly knows how to define these qualities through earlier contact in the "Early Bird," as well as the later student teacher program.

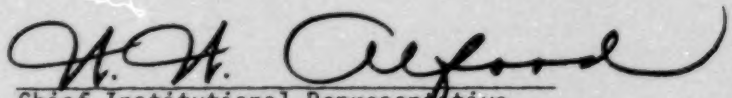
EVALUATION METHODS AND RESULTS

During the internship, the student keeps an hourly log of all his activities and experiences. These are discussed periodically in the Education 300 class. At the end of the 20-hour period, the principal of the school to which the student is assigned and the Union University instructor of Education 300 make a joint evaluation of the student's internship, and his log. This evaluation comprises 25% of the student's grade in Education 300.

Evaluation of the total "Early Bird" Internship Program is made in two ways. First, the principals of all schools are asked to evaluate the program. This evaluation is verbal, and it is directed to the Education Department faculty, particularly to the chairman of the department and the instructor of Education 300. The response from the principals has been overwhelmingly positive. They feel that the program is necessary, even "vital" to the profession of teaching, and feel it is "long over-due" in teacher training institutions in general. Second, the students in the program evaluate it. In a rating scale from "1" (highest) to "5" (lowest), which is a part of a larger evaluation of Education 300, 98%

of all students enrolled in the program since its inception in January, 1975, rated the internship "1". No student has ever rated it lower than "2". The internship program has always been the highest rated single item on the total evaluation of Education 300. Typical comments following the rating of the internship program have been "the internship program is excellent," "one of the best things Union has ever done," "good course . . . especially the internship," "definitely meets the needs of beginning teachers."

Submitted by



Chief Institutional Representative
Union University
Jackson, Tennessee 38301